

MANCHESTER TOWNSHIP BOARD OF EDUCATION

November 7, 2023

SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES

OPEN The special meeting of the Manchester Township Board of Education was called to order by President Mrs. Mount in the Manchester Township Middle School, 2759 Ridgeway Road, Manchester, New Jersey at 5:00 p.m.

ROLL CALL Present: Members Cervenak, Wingler, Georgiano, Weinstein, Poss, Mount, Attorney Monahan, Business Administrator Lorentzen.

NOTICE Adequate notice was published in the Asbury Park Press on Thursday, November 2, 2023, specifying the time and place of the meeting and a statement to this effect shall be entered into the minutes of this meeting.

WHEREAS, Section 8 of the Open Public Meetings Act, N.J.S.A. 10:4-12 permits the exclusion of the public from a meeting in certain circumstances; and

WHEREAS, this public body is of the opinion that such circumstances presently exist.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Manchester Township Board of Education as follows:

1. The public shall be excluded from discussion of the hereinafter-specified subject matters.
2. The general nature of the subject matter(s) to be discussed is legal, personnel, and negotiations.
3. It is anticipated that the matter(s) will be made public within sixty (60) days.

OR

It is anticipated that the matter(s) will not be made public at any foreseeable time in the future.

4. This resolution shall become effective immediately.

EXECUTIVE

SESSION At 5:10 p.m., motion made by Mrs. Mount seconded by Mr. Kelliher to enter executive session.

ROLL CALL Yes – Member Cervenak, Wingler, Georgiano, Weinstein, Poss, Mount
Absent - Pease, Kelliher

RECONVENE At 6:57 p.m., motion made by Mrs. Mount seconded by Mr. Kelliher to reconvene the general meeting.

ROLL CALL Member Cervenak, Wingler, Georgiano, Weinstein, Poss, Mount
Absent - Pease, Kelliher

I. Report of the President:

- Mrs. Mount thanked everyone for attending the meeting and thanked them all for their recent emails and posts about ongoing issues in the district. We take your concerns seriously.
- Mr. Monahan the district Board Attorney discussed what we are doing here tonight and what the board's role is in the process. He also discussed the the role of the Board Attorney and explained that he represents the Board of Education and cannot represent Mr. Berenato. He added that Mr. Kelliher could not attend the meeting tonight due to an ethical conflict because his spouse is a teacher in the district and it conflicted him from taking part in this meeting. He wanted to be here. Lastly, he discussed the rights of the Superintendent under his contract and his right to due process. The Board is bound by statute and regulates what the board can do.

A. ADMINISTRATIVE:

1. Approve first reading and adoption of revised policy, #8312 Acceptable Use of Electronic Transmission Capabilities.

MOTION Motion made by Mr. Poss seconded by Mrs. Mount to accept the above resolutions.

ROLL CALL Yes – Member Cervenak, Wingler, Georgiano, Weinstein, Poss, Mount
Absent - Pease, Kelliher,

B. PERSONNEL:

1. Resolution to terminate employee number 9213 effective November 7, 2023.
2. Resolution to approve Diane Pedroza as Interim Superintendent effective November 8, 2023 - June 30, 2024.
3. Resolution to approve the addendum to the contract of the Director of Curriculum effective November 8, 2023 through June 30, 2024.

MOTION Motion made by Mr. Poss seconded by Mrs. Mount to accept the above resolutions.

ROLL CALL Yes – Member Cervenak, Wingler, Georgiano, Weinstein, Poss, Mount
Absent - Pease, Kelliher,

X. PUBLIC COMMENT

The floor is now open to members of the public. The Board of Education recognizes the value of public comment on educational issues. The Board requests that each statement made by a participant is limited to three minutes as cited in Policy No. 0167. There is a sign-in sheet located on the podium. Please sign in before you speak.

- Heather Cramer discussed a survey sent out by the SPEAG which highlighted that students and parents felt like they were being retaliated against and that the Board took the appropriate action to lead by a better example.
- Donna Robbins on behalf of Mr. and Mrs. Micciulla read the entire ethics complaint and corresponding responses filed against Mr. Berentato and Mr. George regarding perceived retaliation against her husband after a school visit where he pointed out some security concerns.
- Mrs. Abdulla from the NAACP thanked the board for acting on the seriousness of the issues and doing what is best for the students and staff.
- Rob Frazze spoke on behalf of Marc Micciulla and reviewed police records and believes Mr. Berenato falsified his job application. He added that we have HIB in place to protect students. It should also be to protect staff adding this should never have happened. He appreciated the board leading by example.
- Justin Jacobs, MTEA Transportation Association Representative asked how do we keep this from happening again?
- Chris Supsie, Mr Berenato's attorney, stated that Mr. Berenato was excellent as a Superintendent. He added that the district had an outside investigation done on the discrimination claims and the report deemed them unfounded. He added that he looks forward to his client being heard.
- Dennis Adams stated that the affirmative action investigation was never completed because he was not interviewed. He also added that Mrs. Swift does her job with fidelity and is an outstanding administrator.
- A member of the public asked what we are paying Mr. Berenato. Mr. Monahan said nothing at this time.
- Stacy Robinson said her family has lived in Manchester for over 60 years. Her father was the first Police Chief in Manchester. She graduated from Manchester High School in 1984. Her family went to Manchester schools as well. The family has deep roots in town. Her father designed the patch that is on Manchester Police uniforms that depicts a black hand and a white hand shaking hands representing unity and community.

ADJOURN There being no further business the meeting was unanimously adjourned at 7:28 p.m. on a motion by Mrs. Mount seconded by Ms. Weinstein.

ROLL CALL Yes Member Cervenak, Wingler, Georgiano, Weinstein, Poss, Mount
Absent - Pease, Kelliher

Respectfully submitted,

Craig A. Lorentzen, CPA
Board Secretary